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18 July 2016

Marie Halpin
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Halpin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Field End Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 1 July 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- develop the governors' understanding of their strategic role in holding the school to account and move away from involvement in day-to-day matters
- ensure that the next phase of development in teaching and learning is focused on impact rather than compliance. For example, teachers now comply with the expectation that there are a range of tasks of different levels of challenge in every lesson, but they must encourage all pupils to have high aspirations in getting on to the harder tasks and consequently improve outcomes.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the mathematics leader and one of the phase leaders. I met a group of pupils from different year groups, all of whom hold responsibility positions in the school. I spoke to the school improvement leader from the local authority on the telephone. I observed learning, scrutinised work and spoke informally to pupils in visits to Year 3, 4 and 5 lessons with the headteacher. A range of documentation was considered. This included the single central record, current assessment information, the minutes of governing body meetings, recent external reviews of the school's work and analysis of the impact of pupil premium spending.

Context

Since the last inspection there has been considerable change to both the teaching staff and the governing body. The school is expanding to four forms of entry from September 2016. There will be five new teachers and the leadership team has been increased to include year group leaders. A new chair of governors is about to be elected. Three other governors have left since the inspection.

Main findings

There has been a relentless focus on teaching and learning. School leaders have focused on improving teaching through regular training and the introduction of initiatives such as 'coaching triads' to reflect on good practice. Formal lesson observations take place half-termly and there are regular 'learning walks' and scrutiny of work by subject leaders to ensure that teachers are held to account. The reorganisation of middle leaders will support the push for greater accountability and higher expectations and it is a more sustainable model of leadership in this growing school. However, the school is aware of the need to prioritise the development of this group so that there are clear expectations about their responsibility for standards and the right balance between support and challenge from middle leaders in new roles.

Clear expectations about common routines were evident in all of the lessons visited. Pupils know how to use the red, yellow and green cups to indicate their level of confidence to the teacher, consistent formatting on the whiteboards made it easy for pupils to see the different 'chilli challenge' tasks and feedback in books complies with the school's marking policy. A shift to mixed ability teaching has been well researched and will become the 'norm' across all classes from September 2016. This will tackle the current ceiling on aspiration that is evident in some of the groups that are set by ability.

Since the last inspection the school has changed its approach to teaching mathematics. Considerable work on the curriculum by the mathematics leader and the partner school have led to a less textbook-based, more investigative approach. Significant time has been given to enable that work to be done and as a result there are a good range of resources, such as a maths handbook which includes exemplar questions from the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics, to support the teaching of the subject across the school. The mathematics leader will need to continue his co-planning and support for colleagues as this more challenging approach to teaching mathematics beds in.

The governing body has undergone significant change and is developing a better understanding of its strategic function. Some governors have attended training that has been organised and they plan to visit another excellent governing body to support their understanding of roles and responsibilities. The governing body is keen to move forward and now needs to prioritise the completion of training so that it can work effectively to support the school.

External support

The local authority has provided significant support including monthly 'task group' meetings and scrutinised particular areas, for example the work of higher-ability pupils. There is a good link with a local partner school and this has included the provision of time from their subject experts in mathematics and English to support the development of the curriculum. The headteacher has sought further support and scrutiny by buying in external reviews.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for London Borough of Hillingdon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Linsley
Seconded Inspector